

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PROVIDE VETERANS WITH BEST HEALTH CARE AND HIGHEST COMPENSATION

HON. RODNEY ALEXANDER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. Speaker I rise today in the spirit of Independence Day to recognize the will and strength of our men and women in uniform as they fought in wars past and continue to maintain our commitment to democracy throughout the world. Our veterans are living examples of the ideals of our founding fathers and it is those same ideals that are inspiring a new generation of veterans.

More than 300 years ago, the first generation of American veterans fought a war to establish our sovereignty. Along with our independence came the understanding that America would need protection, and we would need a constant military force to ensure the preservation of these freedoms. Americans answered the call to duty, and the willingness of our troops to boldly go into harms way in the defense of democracy has not wavered.

As our nation's veterans volunteered to risk their lives for our protection, our country and its leaders have an obligation to provide them with the care and resources they need and are entitled to once they retire. Veterans have made significant, personal sacrifices and have earned the very best we can offer them.

Yesterday marked the 60th anniversary of the GI Bill, an important step our leaders took to recognize the commitment we owe our veterans. Because of the GI Bill, our veterans were given assistance with the costs of a college education and helped with the purchase of a home or business.

A lot was done, but there is still much to do. Health benefits need improving, the Widow's Tax and Disabled Veterans Tax need ending and education benefits should still be expanded. We cannot increase their costs for health care, and we must not cut funding to their system.

George Washington said "the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation." Our nation's veterans served and protected us, and they inspired the soldiers who responded to the call after them. They fought for our country, for the continued prosperity of our government, and once their service has ended, they should not have to fight the government for the benefits they deserve.

I call on my colleagues in Congress to continue to work together to provide veterans with the best healthcare and the highest compensation, as it is the least they have earned for their years of service.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO TAMERA BICKETT

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the life and legacy of Tamera "Tami" Bickett of Powell Butte, Oregon. Tami bravely battled the Storm King Mountain Fire outside the town of Glenwood Springs, Colorado in 1994, but succumbed to the blaze along with thirteen fellow firefighters while working to protect the City. I personally served as a firefighter and understand the risks they face each and every day. Witnessing the awful inferno that fateful July day, I know Tami and her comrades battled the fire with the utmost courage and valor. With the tenth anniversary of the Storm King Fire approaching, I believe it appropriate to recognize the sacrifice Tami and the Storm King Firefighters made on behalf of a grateful community, state and nation.

Born and raised in Lebanon, Oregon, Tami was a competitive athlete in high school, participating on the cross-country and volleyball teams. In her senior year of high school, she represented her community as a Strawberry Festival princess. Tami joined the U.S. Forest Service in 1988, and was a Squad Boss for the Prineville Hotshots, an elite group of firefighters who specialize in wildland fire suppression. She enjoyed the challenging rigors of fighting fires, even when injuries sustained on the job made her work difficult. She was a dedicated member of her crew, and received a great deal of satisfaction from helping others. Above all, she was devoted to her family and friends.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to rise before this body of Congress and this nation to pay tribute to the life and memory of Firefighter Tamera Bickett. Tami personified the Hotshots credo of Safety, Teamwork and Professionalism; putting herself in harm's way for unfamiliar people and places. She made the ultimate sacrifice doing what she loved, and I, along with the Glenwood Springs community and the State of Colorado are eternally grateful to this brave young woman.

TRIBUTE TO BISHOP VERNON RANDOLPH BYRD

HON. JAMES E. CLYBURN

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Bishop Vernon Randolph Byrd, one of eight legendary leaders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) who will be retiring at this year Quadrennial Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. A native of South Carolina, Bishop Byrd received a public

school education. After graduating from Bell Street High School, he enrolled at Allen University, where he received the Bachelor of Arts degree. He later received a Master of Sacred Theology degree from Boston University.

Called to preach at the age of 12, Bishop Byrd was licensed to preach at the age of 17. His ministry included pastorates at Macedonia AME Church in Seaford, Delaware (1954–1959); St. Paul AME Church in Hamilton, Bermuda (1959–1966); and Macedonia AME Church in Camden, New Jersey (1979–1984). He also served as Presiding Elder of the Newark District from 1966–1967.

Bishop Byrd was elected the 105th Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church at 1984 General Conference and was assigned the 14th Episcopal District. He initiated numerous projects under his administration—one in particular was the Frank Curtis Cummings Health Clinic, which was built in Monrovia, Liberia.

During his tenure he presided over the 16th, 13th, and 5th Episcopal Districts, where his mission continued to be saving souls for the building of God's kingdom. His motto is "Unless souls are saved, nothing is saved!" Bishop Byrd holds memberships in the NAACP, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., and the Royal Lodge of Scotland.

Bishop Byrd is married to Theora Lindsey Byrd. They are the parents of four.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Bishop Vernon Randolph Byrd upon his retirement from the Bishopric. He has provided tremendous leadership for the AME Church, and his long history of educational leadership and service will influence future generations for ages to come. AME founder Richard Allen would be deeply proud of his Episcopal descendent.

A TRIBUTE IN HONOR OF 2004 LEGRAND SMITH OUTSTANDING TEACHER AWARD WINNER LOLA COLLINS OF PARMA, MICHIGAN

HON. NICK SMITH

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 23, 2004

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, education is the key to our Nation's future prosperity and security. The formidable responsibility of molding and inspiring young minds to the avenues of hope, opportunity and achievement partially rests in the hands of our teachers. Today, I would like to recognize a teacher from Parma, Michigan that significantly influenced and motivated exceptional students in academics and leadership who were winners of the LeGrand Smith Scholarship.

Lola Collins teaches fourth and fifth grade at Parma Elementary in Parma. She is credited with instilling in students an enthusiasm for not only these subjects, but also for life. As one of her students, Kelli McCarrell, said, "She showed me how to be who I am, and not be

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